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ABSTRACT

This document reports on the aims, structure, delivery, and reform of continuing education in Germany. The following are among the topics discussed: aims, definitions, and areas of continuing education; structural principles, organizations, and competencies (institutional providers, cooperation, open access, public responsibility, innovative development, situation-oriented learning, quality assurance, program management, multimedia); special experience in further learning in connection with German unification (learning within a process of social transformation, problems in developing competencies); participation in continuing education (general trends, participant groups, participation in informal vocational continuing education, internal and external conditions affecting participation); adult educators and their qualifications and training; and current reform efforts (eliminating marginalization, supporting self-directed living and learning, overcoming separations between general and vocational continuing education, using new technologies, orienting the continuing education sector to the employment crisis, developing a learning society). Concluding the document are 70 footnotes. (MN)

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Continuing Education in Germany

Contribution to UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, July 1997

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Continuing Education in Germany

Contribution to UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, July 1997

This report summarises the most important information about continuing education in Germany.

In detail, it describes and discusses

- the aims, concepts, areas, institutions, competencies, participants and employees of and in continuing education;
- some experiences with further training within the context of German unification;
- the most important structural principles and innovative approaches in German continuing education (in particular, with regard to the UNESCO objectives).

While the report does not attempt to hide the problems, it concentrates on its main purpose of informing about the current status of continuing education in Germany and about the ideas advanced to reform the continuing education system.

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Forewords

Economies, technologies and societies are changing rapidly. Industrial societies are envolving into knowledge-based societies. Business is globalising, reorganising work structures in the process. The importance of key qualifications, including technical, social and communicative competencies, is constantly growing. Education has a central role to play in this context.

National educational systems must continue to develop in light of these perspectives. The roles of school education; vocational training and continuing education; and academic training and further training must be rebalanced. Schools must place a greater focus on elementary skills and basic competencies, while fostering capability and motivation to engage in "lifelong learning". Adult learning will become more and more important as a factor that influences career and personal opportunities and the innovativ-ness of companies and societies.

In a comprehensive sense, education decisively influences our ability to respond to global challenges, to unemployment, to threats to our natural environment and to intolerance and violence. Adult education helps people cope with social, cultural, economic, technological and ecological change - and actively shape such change toward a better future for individuals and for humanity in general.

The international discussion under the heading "lifelong learning for all" is providing valuable impetus for improvement of our educational systems - and for a new understanding of learning as a lifelong activity. At the same time, it is leading to greater interaction of the international factor - which any future-oriented education policy cannot afford to ignore.

UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, which is taking place in 1997, will make an important contribution to the needed international and global discussion in this area - and to improvement of our education systems in light of global challenges.

On the occasion of this conference, I present the following report on adult education and further training in Germany.

Dr. Jürgen Rüttgers

Federal Minister of
Education, Science,
Research and Technology

The present report on the status and perspectives of continuing education in Germany clearly describes the aims of continuing education and legal prerequisites for it, along with the sructures, organisations, competencies and practice of the support of lifelong learning.

The report also discusses further training processes in connection with German unification, and describes the continuing development of professional structures.

The importance of adult education in lifelong learning is constantly increasing, as a result of economic, social and political changes. The report stresses that this means continuing education is a joint task for all those involved in it - individuals, social groups, industry and business and the public sector. A similar emphasis is found in the "Third Recommendation of the Standing Conference of Länder Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on Continuing Education", which presents a comprehensive Länder perspective on education policy for Germany.

From a German perspective, this report describes how continuing education contributes to the development of "learning societies" - by helping people to function in the information society and to shape the "civil society". As the report explains, this makes continuing education one of the key factors in our world's development.

Rolf Wernstedt

Prof. Prof. Rolf Wernstedt

Member of the Land Parliament and
Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs
of the State of Lower Saxony
President of the Standing Conference of
Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs
of the Länder (KMK)

Continuing Education in Germany

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1. Aims, concepts and areas of continuing education

1.1 Aims

Adult education / continuing education in Germany is not bound to any ideology. Providers of such education are not subject to any political or religious regulations regarding curricula.

The only common mandatory basis for such education and training is that provided by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, Germany's Basic Law[1]: a free and democratic basic order oriented primarily to the protection of fundamental human rights ("basic rights").

The Basic Law mandates freedom of religion, of conviction, of speech; the right to assemble and the right to choose one's occupation; it also demands support for every person's right to the free development of his personality (Basic Law, "Grundgesetz", Arts. 4, 5, 9, 12 and 2).

Within the framework of this freedom, openness and diversity, there is now basic agreement in Germany about the following **general aims** of adult education / continuing education:

- ➔ Promotion of free personality development, and cultivation of personal self-determination and responsibility - on the basis of the emancipatory impetus provided by the Enlightenment and Christian-humanistic concepts of the human being as a person with his own thoughts and conscience.
- ➔ Education of mature state citizens able to participate with understanding in the democratic development of the public sector - oriented to the idea that all citizens, both men and women, should be qualified for competent political participation and social responsibility.
- ➔ Qualification and further qualification for efficient, productive employment within a process of economic and technical change - and also within the framework of increasing job mobility within the European Union.
- ➔ Development of key social and communication skills, for partnership, teamwork and multicultural understanding - to safeguard tolerant, peaceful coexistence among the world's peoples.
- ➔ Protection of basic ethic principles, related to responsible behaviour, social justice and international solidarity - on the common anthropological basis of a reasonable morality founded on the principle of reciprocity.

There is basic consensus that continuing education oriented to these basic aims should be open to **all** citizens as they continue their necessary process of lifelong learning.

1.2 Definitions

The two terms "adult education" (Erwachsenbildung) and "continuing education" (Weiterbildung) are both used in Germany to refer to the area of continuing adult learning.

"Adult education" is the older term. Until the 1960s, it referred primarily to open, general education, especially culturally and politically oriented personality development (to some extent, in the tradition of the term "people's education" (Volksbildung) that was used in the Weimar Republic).

"continuing education" has been the accepted general term, since about 1970, for "continuation or resumption of organised learning following the completion of a first educational phase of unspecified length" (so the definition in the German Educational Council's[2] "Structural plan for the Educational Sector"). This term refers primarily to systematically planned, professionally organised educational programmes, especially those offered for further vocational qualification.

Nonetheless, the concept of "purposeless" personality development, a concept originally linked more with the term "adult education" - and as opposed to excessive "instrumentalisation" of further training for economic and social purposes - has been accepted in the German discussion.

In practice, the two terms "adult education" and "continuing education" are now sometimes used as synonyms and sometimes used to refer to two different emphases. Often, the twin term "Erwachsenenbildung / Weiterbildung" is used to refer to this entire area.

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In recent years, "Erwachsenenbildung / Weiterbildung" (adult education / continuing education) has developed in Germany into a fruitful spectrum ranging from "emancipatory" education to vocationally oriented qualification. As a result, this area is now able to support

- ➜ holistic personality development
- ➜ development of competencies required to ensure economic competitiveness
- ➜ political education in behalf of peaceful, humane, democratic development of society.

In practice, the needs to support individual development and to adapt to social developments have been repeatedly balanced as situations have required.

The reason that the German term **"Bildung"** covers all of this is that the term is so open. It can refer both to development of personal abilities, to self-directed learning - and to formal, pedagogically guided education in the interest of society.[1]

In contrast with the openness of the term **"Bildung"**, the German term "Erziehung", unlike the English "education" and the French "éducation", has a narrower sense of direct, pedagogically based guidance and direction. This is why terms such as Erwachsenen-Erziehung (would be "adult education") and Weitererziehung (would be "further education") are not used. They are not seen as appropriate terms for continuing learning by mature adults.

1.3 Areas

Within the overall context of lifelong learning, continuing education is closely tied to other educational areas. It builds on the foundation laid by schools, vocational training and life experience.

In Germany, it is still customary to divide continuing education into the two main areas of **"general"** and **"vocational"** further education. Political and cultural further education are normally classified with general continuing education.

The differentiation made between "general" and "vocational" continuing education is now primarily a formal, organisational one that involves a separation of responsibilities. But in actual practice there are increasing tendencies to overcome this division:

The faster and the more unexpectedly vocational and social requirements change, the more important it becomes to develop human potential in a more comprehensive way that goes beyond the narrow bounds of job specialisation - to "educate" human beings in a general way that prepares them for an open-ended future. This also applies to vocational further training.

For this reason, development of general key qualifications - such as creativity, communication skills, ability to work in a team, initiative, constructive computer skills, etc. - has also acquired increasing importance in recent years in Germany.

On the other hand, broader development of personal abilities in so-called "general" continuing education makes it necessary to provide more room for learning that develops specific skills and competencies suitable for practical challenges in both life and work.

Today, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between general and vocational further education in the area of "key qualifications".

For example, the largest area of continuing education in Germany, study of foreign languages and cultures, can be just as important in an occupational context of export and product modification for other countries as it can be in the context of personal growth.

In other areas - for example, development of political and social competencies, and of personal and cultural identity - such integration is not yet succeeding. Some federal Länder have applied focused support to this area.

Recently, interest has again been increasing in Germany in forms of on-the-job learning that are not regularly organised, and in **"informal"** learning within a social context - i.e. self-directed learning in daily life and experience.

This increasing importance of informal learning in everyday life has also expanded the concept of "continuing education" - beyond the confines of "organised" further training:

Continuing education is now tending to be viewed in Germany as "continuation and enhancement of every type of (formal and informal) learning, following the completion of a phase of basic education during childhood and adolescence."

2. Structural principles, organisations, competencies

2.1 The institutional providers of continuing education, and the principle of plurality

Germany, with its basis of openness and individual freedom to choose objectives, has a wide range of different bearers and organisations that provide continuing education.[4]

The best-known among these are:

■ **The community adult education centres** (Volkshochschulen - VHS). The German Volkshochschulen are educational centres without lodging facilities. They concentrate exclusively on continuing education, and they all offer a comprehensive basic curriculum to all interested citizens. Their courses tend to be for general education, but increasingly they are also offering vocationally oriented training. As a rule, the Volkshochschulen are community (cities and rural districts) further education centres. Because they carry out public tasks, they are normally financed by the communities in which they are located and normally receive Länder subsidies.
The Volkshochschulen, with 28% of all participants in general further education, make up the largest segment of this area of training.[5]

■ **Companies.** Companies (both private and public) are the most important providers of vocational further training. They serve 53% of all participants in vocational further training,[6] either in their own company training facilities (normally found in large companies) or through co-operation with inter-company further training institutions and other providers.

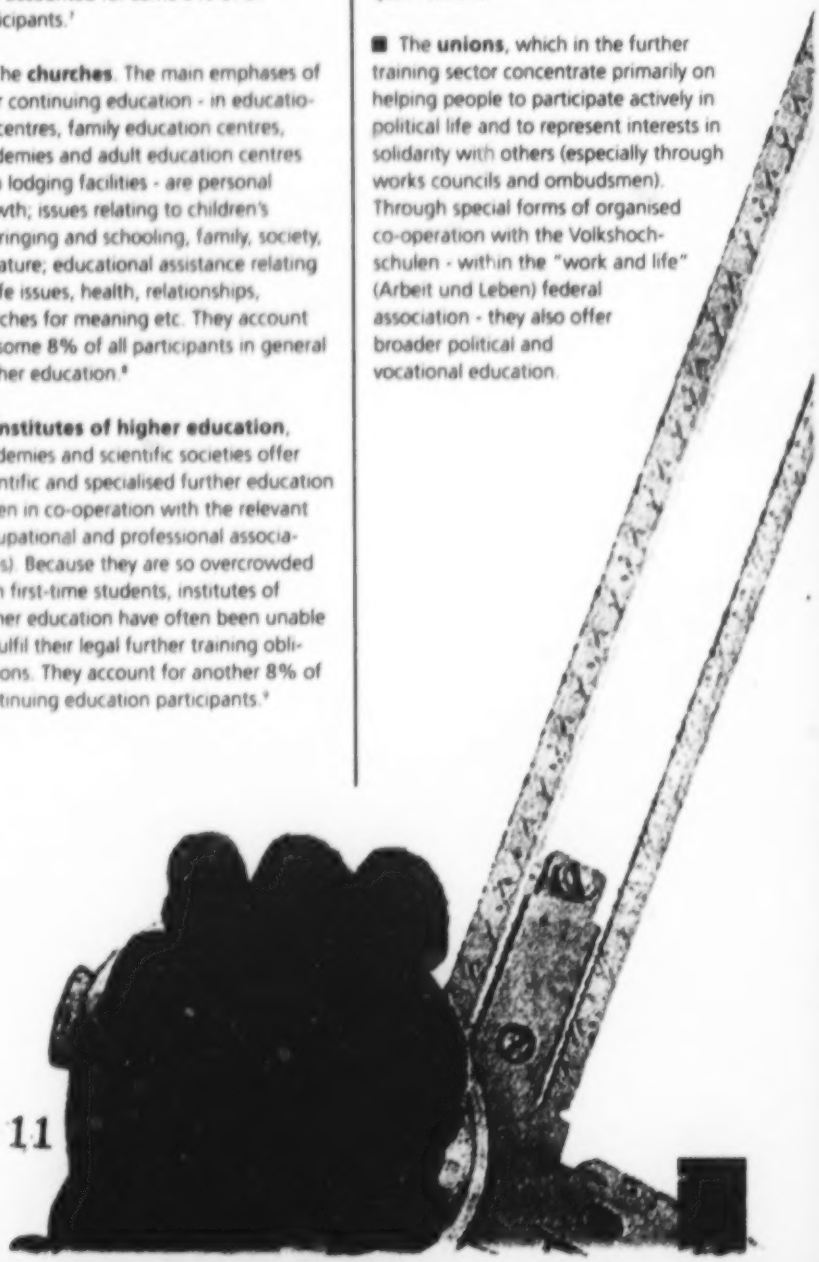
■ The **private institutes**, also known as "commercial" further training institutions. They are especially active in the areas of vocational re-training, acquisition and expansion of vocational qualifications, computer training, foreign language instruction and coursework to obtain formal training qualifications. In 1994, they accounted for some 9% of all participants.[7]

■ The **churches**. The main emphases of their continuing education - in educational centres, family education centres, academies and adult education centres with lodging facilities - are personal growth; issues relating to children's upbringing and schooling, family, society, literature; educational assistance relating to life issues, health, relationships, searches for meaning etc. They account for some 8% of all participants in general further education.[8]

■ **Institutes of higher education**, academies and scientific societies offer scientific and specialised further education (often in co-operation with the relevant occupational and professional associations). Because they are so overcrowded with first-time students, institutes of higher education have often been unable to fulfil their legal further training obligations. They account for another 8% of continuing education participants.[9]

■ The **chambers** (chambers of industry and commerce, crafttrades and agriculture) and the industrial and commercial associations and educational organisations. They offer an inter-company framework for vocational training for purposes of adjustment and promotion, and they administer tests for recognised qualifications.

■ The **unions**, which in the further training sector concentrate primarily on helping people to participate actively in political life and to represent interests in solidarity with others (especially through works councils and ombudsmen). Through special forms of organised co-operation with the Volkshochschulen - within the "work and life" (Arbeit und Leben) federal association - they also offer broader political and vocational education.



■ The (non-denominational) **charity organisations**, which emphasise knowledge and competencies in social, health-related and development-assistance issues. In 1994, their share of all participants was 3%.[10]

■ The **correspondence schools**. They offer further training, in both the general and vocational areas (for example, in commercial and business-oriented subjects), that is not tied to any particular time or place. In addition to their standard "instructional correspondence" for self-paced learning, they are increasingly using new media. In 1994, they accounted for about 1% of all participants in continuing education.[11]

■ The **residential adult education centres** (Heimvolkshochschulen). These further training institutions with lodging facilities are maintained by a range of different sponsors. In contrast with the dominant, regular Volkshochschulen, which have no lodging facilities, they are not particularly common in Germany.

■ The **Federal Centre and the Land centres for political education** (Bundeszentrale und Landeszentralen für politische Bildung) and the various foundations of the political parties, which offer a wide range of educational events - focusing especially on current political issues and basic problems of the democratic state. They account for slightly more than 2% of all participants in general continuing education.[12]

■ The schools of the so-called **"second educational track"** (zweiter Bildungsweg), which offer school qualifications (leaving certificates) to adults: especially secondary (both Realschule and Gymnasium) and vocational school leaving certificates.

■ **Libraries**, museums, socio-cultural centres, independently organised groups, citizens' initiatives, bookstores, etc., which attempt to meet spontaneous demands for learning outside of established continuing education organisations.

■ The **public broadcasting networks**, which are charged with offering informational, educational and culturally oriented programming.

This plurality of continuing education institutions and providers goes hand-in-hand with a great diversity of different conceptual, organisational and didactic approaches and forms. The plurality covers a spectrum from teacher-guided instruction to provision of computer-retrievable learning aids for self-paced learning within an everyday routine.

2.2 Co-operation among, and independence of, the various institutions

Most providers / sponsors and institutions of adult education / further training have joined together into associations and **umbrella organisations**, on various levels. Such organisations on the federal level include

- → The German Association of Volkshochschulen (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband - DVV);
- → The German Industry's Board of Trustees for Vocational Training (Kuratorium der Deutschen Wirtschaft für Berufsbildung - KWB);
- → The German Evangelical Working Association for Adult Education (Deutsche Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Erwachsenenbildung - DEAE);
- → The Catholic Federal Working Association for Adult Education (Katholische Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Erwachsenenbildung - KBE);
- → The training organisation of the Federation of German Trade Unions (Bildungswerk des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbunds);
- → The "Work and Life" federal association (Arbeit und Leben);
- → The Working Group for University Adult Education (Arbeitskreis Universitäre Erwachsenenbildung - AUE);
- → The German Association of Correspondence Schools (Deutscher Fernschulverband - DFV);
- → The Association of Rural Adult Boarding Schools (Verband ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen);
- → The Working Group of German Educational Institutions (Arbeitskreis Deutscher Bildungsstätten - ADB);
- → The Working Committee for Political Education (Arbeitsausschuß für politische Bildung);
- → The Federal Working Group of Family Education Institutions (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft von Einrichtungen für Familienbildung);

etc.

These associations foster a common self-understanding among their members, but this commonality does not include standardised curricula and courses.

The various local continuing education institutions normally are **independent and free in their planning**; as a result, they can respond flexibly to different, often rapidly changing local requirements.

This ability to respond quickly to local learning demands distinguishes adult education / further training institutions from centrally and bureaucratically controlled, fixed-curricular institutions in the public school sector.

On the other hand, it remains a constant problem to safeguard the freedom and autonomy of the various continuing education institutions even though they are dependent on public subsidies (tied to usage restrictions and subject to supervision).

2.3 Open access and freedom of opinion

Although they have their own individual approaches, publicly subsidised continuing education institutions **are all obligated to accept all interested applicants**. In other words, they are not permitted to restrict admission to their offerings to a certain clientele (exceptions are permitted for special events aimed at certain target groups).

This open access for all is formally guaranteed in Germany, to a large extent, within the area of continuing education that is not oriented to certain vocational qualifications. On the other hand, some socially based restrictions do occur in practice - for example, if participation fees are too high for some would-be participants, or if the number of available spaces is very limited.

As subsidies from sponsors and from the public sector are reduced, and as further training events become more dependent on participants' fees, institutions' social openness could be threatened.

The interpretation of the concept of obligatory openness - with respect to content, partisan politics and ideology - is somewhat controversial, especially where denominational, politically affiliated or other interest-linked sponsors or providers are involved.

On the other hand, there is broad agreement that while such sponsors and providers and their employees should not have to deny their own convictions, they must permit people with conflicting opinions and beliefs to exert their basic rights (at the sponsors' events) to "freely express their opinions orally, in writing and by means of pictures", as long as such expression does not violate the personal honour of other people (Grundgesetz / Basic Law, Arts. 5.1 and 5.2).

In general, the German continuing education sector exhibits the appropriate openness, freedom and tolerance.

2.4 Public responsibility for continuing education

In the general discussion about continuing education, every person's basic right to develop his personality as he chooses (Basic Law, 2.1) is seen to imply a public responsibility to provide public funding in order to enable those who wish to participate in adult education / further training to do so.

This public responsibility is seen primarily as a responsibility to safeguard a certain **framework** and a broad spectrum of openly available options and aids, to enable all citizens to learn in a way that develops their abilities, skills and competencies.

The public responsibilities within Germany's federal system are organised in such a way that the sixteen federal **Länder** have complete responsibility for general continuing education and school-based vocational further training.
The Länder establish the most important principles and support conditions - usually by passing the appropriate continuing education laws and execution ordinances - for the various continuing education institutions and organisations.[13]

Ten of the 16 federal Länder have passed special educational-leave laws that enable employees to take paid leaves of absence from their jobs, for a certain number of working days per year (usually five), in order to participate in further training events.

The **Federal Government's** responsibilities in this connection include

- Issuing the framework laws for higher education institutes (Basic Law 75, 1a), including laws covering scientific further training, and participating in support for scientific research (Basic Law 74, 13);
- Issuing ordinances for vocational further training and retraining outside of schools (Vocational Training Act, crafts ordinances);
- Continuing education to support linguistic and cultural integration of refugees, expellees and resettlers (Basic Law 74, 6);
- Regulating the rights and obligations of providers of, and participants in, correspondence instruction (Act on protection in correspondence instruction - Fernunterrichts-Schutzgesetz);
- Support for exemplary developments in continuing education;
- Collecting Land-overarching statistics on continuing education;
- Providing individual financial support for participation in further training (Employment Promotion Act, Federal Law Concerning the Promotion of Training, Act to promote further training in support of promotion - Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz).

In addition, the Federal Government has a role in

- supraregional education planning (Basic Law 91b),
- political further training;
- international co-operation in continuing education.

The Federal Government and the Länder have a special **joint responsibility** in all questions that are "of relevance for the whole", that require "federal participation to improve the quality of life" (Basic Law 91a) and that have to do with "protecting the legal and economic union, especially protecting common standards of living beyond the boundaries of a given Land" (Basic Law 72, 3).

The Federal Government and the Länder also co-operate within the "Federal / Länder Commission for education planning and research promotion", while the Länder co-operate among themselves in the area of further training primarily within the "Committee for continuing education and further training" of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK).

The relationship between the Federal Government and the Länder in the continuing education sector is normally characterised by fruitful co-operation and competition.

The **communities** and rural districts play a special role as public backers and sponsors of continuing education: as part of their responsibility for their citizens, they are charged with ensuring that appropriate continuing education options are available to the inhabitants of their areas. They fulfil this responsibility primarily by supporting their Volkshochschulen.

2.5 Financing for continuing education, and the subsidiarity principle

Investments in continuing education cannot be precisely determined. They are often not clearly and separately listed in the relevant budgets that fund them. This applies, for example, to continuing salary payments for participants in further training or to "learning on the job".

With some reservations, total direct ex-penditures for continuing education in Germany in 1994 can be roughly estimated as being somewhat over 70 billion DM.[14]

Over half of this funding came from **private** sources (**companies** invest some 27 billion DM annually in further training,[15] including continuing salary payments during participation in further training,[16] and **participants** themselves pay fees totalling some 10 billion DM).[17]

Public funding is provided primarily from unemployment insurance (in 1994, some 13.5 billion DM were spent on re-training, further training and occupational integration[18]), and from the budgets of the Länder, the communities and the Federal Government (total of some 10 billion DM)[19].

The **Länder** support is not standardised. As a rule, it protects important infra-structures, however, in combination with support provided by backers (for example, with support from the communities for the Volkshochschulen).

In addition to public structural support pursuant to the Länder continuing education laws, special focused support is available from the Federal Government and the Länder - for example, for improvement of economic structures, for job creation, for development assistance, for health education, family planning and innovative projects.

Apart from company further training, backers' support for continuing education institutions is normally provided in accordance with the **subsidiarity principle**. This means: to begin with, the continuing education institutions must charge for their services. Only the additional funding they require (i.e. which they are unable to provide themselves) may then be "subsidiarily" provided.

For example, for a Volkshochschule, such a subsidy could take the form of a "deficit compensation" provided by the community (the amount is equivalent to the uncovered costs after settlement with participants' fees and any Länder or federal subsidies).

The amounts of the subsidies from public budgets (of the communities, the Länder and the Federal Government) are determined through annual **parliamentary approvals**. This can lead to planning uncertainties for continuing education institutions, especially during periods of tight budgets.

Since the **Federal Government**, the **Länder** and the **communities** are now all struggling with deficit-ridden budgets, e.g. some Volkshochschulen - which are charged with providing universal basic continuing education services - now must meet 70% of their total costs through participants' fees. For an increasing number of participants, this high percentage is erecting financial barriers.

Currently, a number of Länder are considering **amendments of their continuing education laws** and their relevant execution regulations. As part of this debate, more flexible support criteria are being discussed - for example, criteria that would permit subsidy of the counselling - which is playing a more and more significant role - provided in support of citizens' learning. Nonetheless, many publicly subsidised continuing education institutions now are concerned about further financial restrictions.

Federal subsidies (in addition to support pursuant to the work promotion act) are provided for linguistic and cultural integration of resettlers, refugees and expellees. The Federal Government also finances the "Continuing education reporting system" (Berichtssystem Weiterbildung) and contributes substantially to financing of some research institutes and research projects in the area of continuing education.

Some of the public funding for vocational further training, like the permitted tax deductions for participation in further training, directly benefits the further training participants.

Recently, continuing western German support payments to the new East German Länder, in conjunction with the tax-revenue decreases due to high unemployment, have increasingly been overburdening the public budgets of the Federal Government, the Länder and the communities and forcing these institutions to increase their levels of borrowing.
In addition, these burdens have led to **cutbacks on public subsidies** for adult education / further training.

These cutbacks have affected not only the traditionally supported, recognised institutions, but also new further training initiatives. Such initiatives now have very little chance of being accepted into the catalogue of recipients of public subsidies.

Most continuing education institutions practice a form of variable **mixed financing**:

→ They meet their expenses with a wide range of different types of income (participants' fees, backers' contributions, public subsidies, project funding and even some funding from European Union support programmes). They also attempt to develop new funding sources to compensate for decreases in support they experience.
→ They attempt to compensate for lower income from courses in less popular subjects (but which are considered socially relevant), or from courses for participants in weak social positions, with higher fees in popular courses (for example, certain vocational qualifying courses, PC and language courses with well-situated participants).

A growing share of learning facilities offered within the growing continuing education market receives no public subsidies. On the other hand, the institutions that offer such unsubsidised training remain free of public and social obligations.

The **industry's investments** in further training have currently stabilised at a relatively high level.

2.6 Competition and co-operation between continuing education providers

In Germany, the principle of plurality has produced not only to a great diversity of continuing education providers and institutions - it has also fostered **competition** between the various providers, especially under the pressure created by tighter and tighter budgets.

The political tendency to permit further training offerings to compete openly within a continuing education market, free of any competition-distorting subsidies, has encouraged the competitors to focus on popular subjects, on well-situated participants and on larger metropolitan areas.

But some trends in the German continuing education sector run counter to these competitive developments, especially where provision of basic training services is concerned: the new challenges and tighter budgets have led to increased local and regional **co-operation** between continuing education institutions and other institutions and initiatives.
Cities and regions have introduced regional structural and further training policies to focus energies and resources on local problems. Often, the Volkshochschulen, as community continuing education centres, play a central role in such policies

In the area of **vocational further training**, regional co-operation networks have arisen in recent years that comprise companies, chambers, associations, industrial training institutions and various other further training sponsors/providers.

On the Land level, relevant consultation and co-operation is taking place in "Land Boards of Trustees for Continuing Education" (Landeskuratorien für Weiterbildung).

And at the **federal level**, the "Concerted Action for Continuing Education" (Konzertierte Aktion Weiterbildung) is the platform for ongoing dialogue, between all providers and sponsors of general and vocational education, regarding common interests and problems. Recently, this dialogue has focused especially on new challenges for continuing education in connection with German and European unification, with new technologies and with the world-wide lifelong-learning movement.

2.7 The guiding principle: orientation to the participants

In contrast with education in schools and higher education institutes, further training is "regulated" less by "from-the-top-down" ordinances and regulations and more by decisions made on the "grassroots" level.

This is an important prerequisite for practical implementation of the guiding principle of orientation to participants, which is central in the German continuing education sector.

Continuing education courses are expected to be oriented to articulated (and, in part, also anticipated) **human learning requirements**.
Since participation in adult education / further training events is normally voluntary, a continuing education institution can succeed in the long term only if it caters to the interests of potential participants and if it seeks to mobilise interest.

Discussion has continued for years regarding more narrow or more liberal interpretations of the principle of orientation to participants. The main focus of this discussion is the extent to which an orientation to participants' interests and expectations can and should be achieved by giving participants' representatives a **voice** in programme planning. Or should instead an overabundance of topics and variations be prepared, on the basis of informally collected requests, and then potential participants be permitted to choose which courses are to be carried through?

As part of increasing **individualisation** of life planning and lifestyles, learners are increasingly demanding a greater voice in designing and guiding their learning processes.

On the other hand, there is still a need for clear direction and social contact.

In practice, various means are now being explored for balancing these differing participants' demands.

2.8 Innovative development of abilities and key qualifications

Educational policy discussion in Germany is increasingly being shaped by a critical phase of transformation that is occurring:

- in the economic arena, as market competition becomes increasingly global;
- in employment policy, as a result of increasing structurally based unemployment;
- in the environment, due to the continuing threats to the natural basis of life;
- in social policy, as a result of increasing crime rates and a growing gap between rich and poor;
- in cultural terms, as a result of changing and diverging values and behaviour.

The difficulties in overcoming such upheaval have led to critical discussion regarding the extent to which the knowledge, approaches and competencies normally imparted in continuing education are still relevant - and whether new perspectives and new abilities and skills must be developed and imparted in order to meet the new challenges.

The current discussion is focusing primarily in this connection on broader development of **"key qualifications"**:

- for more independent thinking, decision-making, action and responsibility;
- for open, flexible approaches to changed situations and requirements;
- for more sensitivity, fairness and willingness to compromise in conflicts of interests and in democratic consensus-building processes;
- for attitudes and actions based on awareness of, and responsibility for, the interrelationships and well-being of the whole;
- for innovative learning, i.e. problem-solving-oriented, creative processing of information and experience.

There is broad consensus that such key competencies are now needed not only by managers, but also by all persons who face relevant demands in their work and life and in the nearly boundless "information society".

This consensus is also driven by **economic pressure**: the realisation that Germany can succeed economically in the world market only if it has outstanding quality, innovation and reliability in its production and service structures; and the awareness that the resulting need for autonomously operating teams, backed by reliable, competent consulting, maintenance, repair and product-adaptation service departments, to be able to respond quickly and intelligently, on location, to changing requirements, means that all levels of companies, institutions and society must constantly be learning.

2.9 Constructive learning in the knowledge society

Increasingly, discussion in Germany's continuing education sector is focusing not only on the challenges posed by the "information society" and the "knowledge society", but also on the challenges of the **"learning society"**.

It is normally assumed that the growing general flood of information must be constructively processed and learned. There is widespread insight that people confronted with the growing wealth of knowledge must be able to creatively concentrate on and choose relevant information and practically, efficiently and flexibly apply it to problems. But those who would intelligently apply knowledge to new social and economic development and social "inventions" must remain willing to engage in constructive learning.

For this reason, in the German discussion the ability to **process information constructively and the ability to implement knowledge creatively** are seen as key abilities that must be developed through lifelong learning.

"Constructive processing of information" refers to a process in which information, impressions, encounters and experience are a) perceived and compared with earlier experience and b) related to insights and perspectives obtained from earlier experience. The learner carries out this process with the aim of modifying his or her understanding and behaviour in such a way that he or she is better equipped to deal with new experiences and challenges.[20]

One of the main current aims of continuing education in Germany is to foster such constructive learning - learning to enhance approaches to life and problems - in all people, to the greatest possible extent. The aim of this effort is to help close the gap between fast economic, technical, cultural and social change on the one hand and lagging human abilities to control and shape developments on the other.

2.10 Situation-oriented learning and learning without pressure to act

A particularly effective, feasible means of developing abilities and competencies has proven to be constructive learning involving real or simulated situations and problems that cannot be mastered without the skills and competencies being sought. Consequently, continuing education in Germany has acquired the important task of promoting and refining interdisciplinary, situation-oriented, problem-oriented learning wherever possible.

The key abilities, skills and competencies now needed for creative problem-solving should also be widely fostered through focused development of reflected, experientially oriented learning in practical (in some cases, also "virtual") challenges in the learner's own life, work and media environment.

Integration of learning within other life activities has become a new challenge for further education in Germany - in addition to learning within specialised systematic contexts and in special educational situations, free of direct pressure to succeed and act.

"Learning working" and "working learning" have become well-known central concepts in vocational further training.

The entire continuing education system in Germany is beginning to develop a balanced relationship between such life-situation-oriented learning within a social context and fundamental, interconnected organised learning in special educational institutions.

In this balanced relationship, in which both types of learning benefit, meaning and interconnections can be understood both through integration within specialised contexts and through reference to personal or social issues and problems.

2.11 Quality assurance and quality management

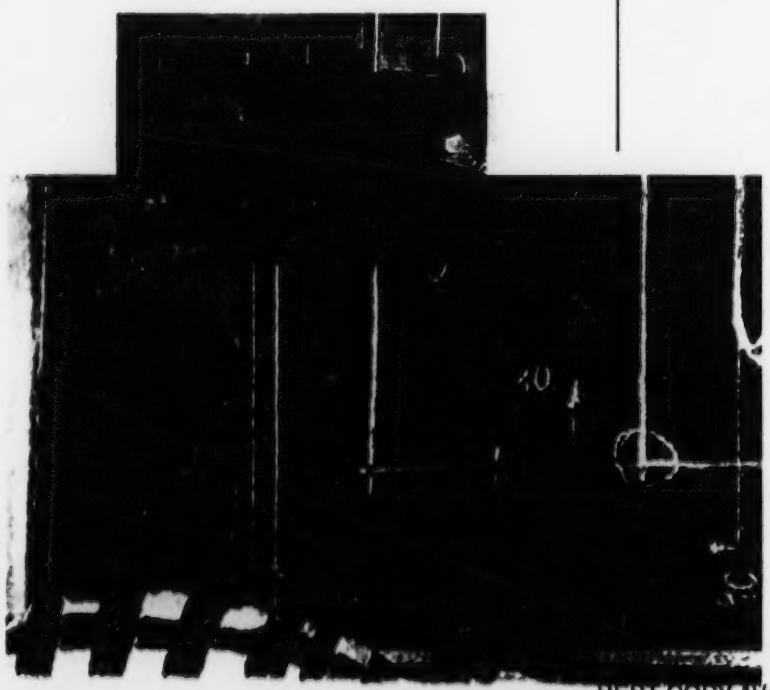
Quality assurance and quality management in further education have become an important topic in education-policy discussion in Germany.

On the one hand, participants (consumers) **need to be protected** from further training that does not meet required minimum standards with regard to effective imparting of the desired knowledge and qualifications. To provide such protection, relevant requirements are established for subject-related competence and adult-educational skills of training providers, their employees and their training materials etc., and the necessary measures for qualification are introduced.

In this context, a more customer-oriented approach to quality management has developed. The focus of such management is on achieving a new sort of quality in organisations, in order to achieve greater average reliability for the customers.

The most important quality criterion is relevance of learning and subject matter for the participants and their self-reliance and problem-solving skills.

New impetus for quality assurance in further training is expected from an ongoing federal / Länder project for reviewing existing qualifications.



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2.12 Multimedia

In the past few years, the need for greater use of new media in continuing education has been widely accepted in Germany.

The main advantages of learning with the new media are that it needs not be tied to specific times and places and that it can be more easily **self-directed** (through selection of various learning modules).

This provides a response to the growing difficulties resulting from differences in individual life situations, especially those due to flexible working times and flexible life rhythms. Organised courses for large groups of differently scheduled participants have reached their structural limits for accommodation of such differences.

This also explains the growing significance of correspondence courses and studies in further training. The established, usually printed materials for flexible, self-paced studies are increasingly being complemented by materials on floppies, CD-ROM, videocassettes; by computer programmes and the Internet's information and communications resources; and, by **"virtual" further training facilities** (now being planned and introduced).

The integration of impersonal media in continuing education has been accompanied, for some time in Germany, by a call for a way to add direct communications with experts and other learners, in order to create a balance. This need for social contact has been repeatedly voiced especially by women.

One much-discussed approach seeks to deal with the difficulty of meeting a wide range of different individual needs by means of learning that is more self-directed.[21]

According to this approach, learners should be able to engage directly in online interactive exchanges or "face-to-face" contacts and to incorporate these exchanges and contacts within their individual learning processes according to their own needs.

One central idea of many reformers is online learning, at terminals. Such learning can take advantage of relevant information, learning aids and consultation and communications resources worldwide, without being tied to curricula, prescribed courses of study, etc.

But consideration of a number of **"tele-teaching"** approaches has produced strong criticism of attempts to use modern media simply to present traditional teaching methods. Many continuing education representatives stress the central importance of the direct, personal contact between the teacher and the student. Yet others call for more innovative media use, in which learners and classes are permitted to creatively process and help shape media-based learning materials and ideas.

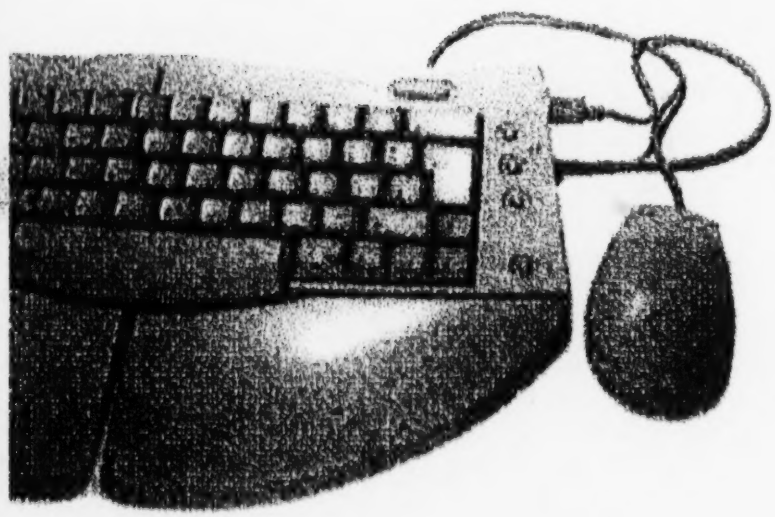
Currently, attempts at more comprehensive implementation of new online teaching and communications methods, in order to open further training to a wider group and make training more flexible, are encountering technical, organisational and didactic **difficulties**.

Many would-be users find the technical implementation to be too complicated and too time-consuming, and maintain that this will prevent the new technologies from being a more popular and successful tool in "lifelong universal learning". The didactic difficulties have to do with the inadequacies of the available software.

For this reason, there is a danger that a wide gap will open up in Germany - at the outset - between users and non-users, between the "connected" and the "unconnected", between the "knowing" and the "unknowing".

At the same time, the awareness is growing, however, that great energy and creativity must be put to work to close this gap.

Most German continuing education sector employees are optimistic in that the new technologies can be used to acquire international experience and in that communication and co-operation in this area is increasing.



3. Special experience in further education in connection with German unification[22]

3.1 Learning within a process of social transformation

The unexpected rapid unification of two countries with completely different social, economic and value systems presented a great challenge to the continuing education sectors in both the new and the old Federal Länder.

16 million East Germans, living in a country that for over 40 years had had a socialist government and a centrally planned, resources-poor economy, were suddenly called on to live and work within a free and democratic system with market-oriented production and open services structures.

The hope that this adjustment could be achieved solely through enormous efforts in the further education and retraining sector has proven to be largely in vain. This has led to new and critical reflections about the possibilities and prerequisites for **learning within fundamental transformation processes**.

Further education courses have enabled many East Germans to obtain needed knowledge about the democratic constitution and state structures of the Federal Republic of Germany, about the functioning of a market economy, about the Federal Republic's social system and about the Federal Republic's pension and tax laws, etc., and some new occupational knowledge and skills have been imparted. But the level of understanding between people in eastern and western Germany still leaves room for improvement.

3.2 Problems in developing competencies

On the basis of well-known insights into the psychology of learning, social behaviour and motivation, experts had been able to predict that it would be difficult to change many people's basic attitudes within just a few years. But unexpected problems arose in the **development of new competencies** - even of latent abilities that could normally be mobilised, so it would be expected, through the proper challenges and with the appropriate further training assistance.

In political, social and economic transformation processes, further education has the decisive task of helping people to develop their potential abilities, - abilities, skills and competencies that will enable people to cope with new situations and deal with new requirements. Consequently, competence-oriented learning has become a central issue in further training discussion in Germany.

Insights into problems that arose in eastern Germany might well be useful for other approaches to learning aimed at mastering processes of social transformation.

For example, those people in eastern Germany who received the impression

- ➔ that the vocational knowledge and qualifications they had obtained in the GDR's further training system were not recognised;
- ➔ that the communities and forms of social interaction in which they had lived were rejected as being politically and ideologically tainted;
- ➔ that western Germans often viewed them as being less capable, flexible and efficient; as having less endurance and initiative etc.

were likely to feel injured in their personal identity and stability, in a way that blocked or hindered effective development of further abilities and competencies.

And when a major vocational training offensive takes place within a situation of economic dismantling, in which learners have no hope of ever being able to apply what they have learned to the employment market - with the result that further training measures begin to function as social support and occupational therapy, then there is a substantial **lack of motivation** to develop new competencies and maintain existing ones.

The sobering experiences with further training in eastern Germany have sensitised employees in the continuing education sector to the complexity of competence-oriented learning within social transformation processes - and to the role played by the biographies, motivation, self-images, attitudes, perspectives, interpretations and life perspectives of learners - and their teachers and fellow learners.

Critical study of these experiences could be useful for development of other approaches to learning to deal with difficult processes of social transformation, and of other approaches to intercultural further education.

4. Participation in continuing education

4.1 General trends in participation

Every three years, the Infratest Sozialforschung social-research institute carries out a representative survey, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology (BMBF), of participation in continuing education in Germany.

According to the last "Continuing Education Reporting System" (Berichtssystem Weiterbildung), in 1994 some 42% of Germans between the ages of 19 and 64 participated in organised continuing education.[23] (The figure for western Germany was 43%, that for eastern Germany was 37%.)[24]

This represents 5% growth since 1991.[25]

In 1994 in Germany, a total of 20 million adults[26] (out of a total population of 81 million)[27] took part - more or less frequently - in continuing education courses, lectures or study courses.

Some 26% of these adults attended general-education events, and 24% attended vocationally oriented further training events.[28]

52% of the participants pursued general further education, and 44% attended instruction in vocational further training.[29]

In 1994, the special **content emphases** were foreign languages and health education,[30] along with commercial/business courses and further training in computer skills.[31]

The strongest motive shared by all participants for participating in continuing education is a desire to be able to cope better with daily life (both job-related and private).[32]

4.2 Participant groups

The **age group** most frequently represented in general continuing education courses was the 19-34 year old group; in vocational further training, it was the 34-49 year old group.[33]

Those over 60 years of age concentrated predominantly on subjects in non-vocationally oriented continuing education.[34]

Participation is increasing in all age groups.[35]

The dependency of continuing education participation on **previous education** is unmistakable:

60% of those persons with the Abitur, the highest secondary school qualification, took part in continuing education events. The corresponding figure for the group of those with a medium-level qualification (on the Realschule secondary school level) was 47%. And only 29% of adults with a lower school qualification took part in continuing education events.[36]

The dependency of participation in continuing education on participants' level of vocational education is also obvious:

While 64% of persons with a Fachhochschule qualification took advantage of continuing education offerings, only 19% of those in the group without vocational education did so.[37]

Employment is also an important factor for participation in continuing education:

Whereas 50% of employed people took part in continuing education, only 29% of the unemployed did so.[38]

The breakdown by **occupational groups** was as follows: 65% of civil servants, 56% of salaried employees, 52% of self-employed persons and only 36% of workers took part in continuing education.[39]

Significant differentiation was also apparent among workers:

41% of skilled, specialised workers, but only 27% of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, participated in continuing education.[40]

The **sexes** were also unequally represented in continuing education:

44% of the men in Germany, and 40% of the women, took part in continuing education in 1994.[41] The number of women taking part has continually increased since 1979 (the first year in which a representative survey was taken).[42]

Women tended to participate slightly more frequently in general continuing education (28%) than men (24%), while men participated in vocational further training considerably more often (28%) than women (19%).[43]

The last of these differences obviously has to do with the fact that only one in two women in Germany, but three out of four men, are gainfully employed. In addition, two-thirds of working women (but only one in five men) are unskilled or semi-skilled employees without recognised vocational training qualifications.[44]

4.3 Regional distribution of participation in continuing education

Women in **eastern Germany** were much more likely to have a vocational training qualification than those in western Germany. And the percentage of women who were gainfully employed was significantly higher in the former GDR than in former West Germany. In keeping with the former GDR's considerable degree of equal opportunity for men and women, equal percentages of men and women in that country participated in further training (both 27%).[45]

In eastern Germany, the additional burdens imposed on working women - managing the household and taking care of children - rather functioned as a hindrance to participation in general continuing education: in 1994, 17% of women, and 18% of men, took part in general continuing education, while in western Germany the percentage of women in general continuing education was 5% higher than that for men.[46]

In **south Germany and north Germany**, participation in continuing education, at 46% and 44%, is higher than in central Germany (40%) and in eastern Germany (37%). On the other hand, in 1994 participation in vocational further training was highest in eastern Germany (27%) - as compared with 25% in south Germany, 23% in north Germany and 21% in central Germany.[47]

These differences are clearly related to problems of occupational reorientation, along with extensive vocational retraining, in **eastern Germany**. They also have to do with the significantly lower interest shown by eastern Germans in general continuing education (17% as opposed to 29% in western Germany).[48]

The **breakdown by city size** reveals the following: urban regions with 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants have the highest level of participation in continuing education (46%). In large cities with populations of over 500,000, it is 44%, while in small communities with less than 20,000 in-habitants it is 40%.[49]

Differences in population affect participation in general continuing education more than participation in vocational further training.

4.4 Participation in informal vocational continuing education

In recent years, informal continuing education, i.e. training which the learners guide themselves, and which is not organised by others, has acquired increasing significance.

For this reason, the Berichtssystem Weiterbildung for 1994 also carried out a representative survey of participation in informal learning (although the survey was limited to the area of vocational further training).

The survey revealed that participation in informal learning is **twice as high** in Germany as participation in organised vocational continuing education.[50]

For example, one in three employed persons studied specialised, occupationally oriented literature of their own accord. 23% of all employed persons added to their fund of knowledge through **experiential learning** - by watching and doing - and another 23% attended lectures and informational events of their own choice.

Between 15 and 16% continued their learning on the job, together with their superiors and colleagues, and attended seminars and trade fairs.

Some 11% expanded their knowledge and competencies of their own accord with the help of media; 8% visited other areas of their own companies, and 4% participated in "quality circles", "shop circles" etc.[51]

On the whole, the percentage of men involved in informal continuing education is higher (55%) than the corresponding percentage of women (48%).[52]

Large differences between different **occupational groups** are also apparent in this area of informal, occupationally oriented learning:

While 73% of civil servants (and 81% of civil servants in higher service), 59% of salaried employees (75% of employees in middle management) and 61% of self-employed persons engaged in informal continuing education, only 33% of workers did so (differentiated: 42% of skilled workers and 20% of unskilled and semi-skilled).[53]

This shows nevertheless that about as many **workers** practice informal, self-guided learning as take part in in-company and in externally organised vocational further training.

4.5 Some internal and external conditions affecting participation in continuing education

Germans **greatly value continuing education** and show a high level of interest in it:

94% of all adults consider continuing education to be necessary, and 84% view continuing education as in important aid that helps people to live more effectively.[54]

But many people also feel that the current continuing education framework is inadequate to the task of encouraging more people to participate:

42% of people between the ages of 19 and 64 complain of a lack of continuing education opportunities in their local areas. And this sort of dissatisfaction is somewhat higher among the citizens of eastern Germany than among those in western Germany.[55]

There are many reasons why interest in continuing education, which almost all profess to have, often does not lead to actual participation in training:

One position is that interest in learning can also be satisfied taking advantage of informal options, and that organised learning is only one available form of acquiring knowledge. Such informal options are seen to include, for example, reading of specialised literature and "learning by doing".[56]

Another factor, in addition to a lack of local resources, that is seen to hinder participation in continuing education is the memory of a negative school experience. This produces fears, along with hesitation to enter into time commitments and to make the necessary investments, and a general distaste for the so-called "world of education".[57]

A total of 42% of those interested in continuing education report that they would require more information and advising, and more transparency in the continuing education market, in order to translate their strong interests into practical action - and in order to adjust to new developments (reported by 55% as a motivating factor), to avoid disadvantages on the job (54%) or to obtain a promotion or better job (53%), to expand their own knowledge (45%), to refresh their knowledge (33%) and to avoid being limited to a particular occupation (17%[58]).[59]

Only 49% of adults in eastern Germany, and 60% of those in western Germany, feel that they have a good understanding of the continuing education resources available to them.[60]

In other words: 51% of those surveyed in eastern Germany, and 40% of those surveyed in western Germany, expressed a desire for **clearer information and counselling** regarding suitable opportunities for continuing education.[61] Workers are particularly strongly represented among these critics.[62]

5. Employees in the continuing education sector

5.1 The various groups of employees and their qualifications

Employees in Germany's continuing education sector, i.e. "adult educators", do not fit into a standardised occupational mould.

The following **four groups** play the most important role in organised adult education / further training:

- Full-time employees at the middle-management level whose main tasks have to do with planning, assignments and general management (planning programmes, organising courses, selecting courses, hiring and supporting instructors, carrying out public relations, marketing, financial planning, etc.).
- Part-time employees, usually working on a fee basis; they are usually the people who provide the actual teaching, training and advising to continuing education participants.
- Full-time teachers, facilitators, counsellors.
- Full-time employees working in administrative capacities in continuing education institutions.

At Volkshochschulen and in church continuing education institutions, almost all teachers fit into the second of the above groups. In other continuing education institutions, the second and third groups play the leading roles. The third group is dominant at state institutions (higher education institutes, institutes where state employees are trained, etc.)

On the other hand, some part-time employees also have directing and management functions (especially in small institutions and in organisations in which further training accounts for only a fraction of activities overall).

As to the sizes of the various groups, the group of full-time employees involved in planning, management, teaching or administration are relatively small, while the group of part-time teachers and learning facilitators is many times larger.

No precise figures are available, but rough estimates indicate that a total of some 100,000 persons work full-time in adult education / further training in Germany, while somewhat less than 1 million people work in this field part-time.[63]

Neither full-time nor part-time employees in adult education / further training are required to have certain formal qualifications or to follow certain career tracks. In this regard, this sector is unlike the schools and higher education institutes.

For this reason, this sector offers positions and upward mobility to people who distinguish themselves by the quality of their work - even if they lack relevant examinations.

On the other hand, the level of **professionalism** in this area is constantly increasing. The best example of this is that newly hired full-time instructors (hauptberufliche pädagogische Mitarbeiter - HPM) are increasingly being required to have completed studies in education, adult education, pedagogy or psychology. And yet often this requirement can be met by means of short additional or complementary studies, in connection with completed studies in a different field.

Further training of the people who work in the continuing education sector is given due emphasis by all continuing education providers / sponsors and by the Länder. The jointly subsidised German Adult Education Institute (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung - DIE) gives special attention to this task.

Concepts are now in place, along with projects supported by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology (BMBF), for further training of pedagogical personnel. These concepts and projects are aimed at intensifying "local" further training and making it more qualification-oriented (certificates). The spectrum of offerings includes management, marketing, organisation and personnel-development seminars for managers; workshops in supervising and teaching discussion/dialogue and advising skills; and workshops in providing orientation for people entering professions.

This trend toward professionalisation of adult education has grown from the insight that efficient, customer-oriented planning and **management** in the continuing education sector must be based on modern adult-education theory.

Good subject-related training and experience is now expected of teachers and **learning facilitators** in adult education / further training. Participation in additional training in adult education and didactics is recommended.

The so-called "new self-employed" are acquiring increasing significance in the continuing education sector. This group consists of instructors and learning facilitators who earn their living by functioning as self-employed entrepreneurs and offering ("selling") their services to various institutions.

The percentage of continuing education instructors who work at general education and vocational training schools has considerably decreased in the past few years in comparison with the percentage of instructors who are "experts" in the various relevant (non-pedagogical) fields.

Overall, the personnel structure in Germany's continuing education sector has reached a useful, variable balance, oriented to the various circumstances and tasks, between adult-educational professionalisation and openness to experts from various fields and walks of life.

5.2 Scientific training of employees in continuing education

The greater the degree to which educational policy has accorded adult education / further training (especially since the 1970s) a status equal to that of the other educational sector, the more often Germany's higher education institutes have offered **courses of study** in education, with specialisation in adult education / further training.

Most German universities now offer such courses leading to a diploma or Magister (master's degree) examination: Aachen, Augsburg, Bamberg, Berlin, Bielefeld, Bochum, Bremen, Chemnitz, Cologne, Dortmund, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Eichstätt, Essen, Frankfurt/Main, Freiburg, Gießen, Hagen, Halle, Hamburg, Hanover, Heidelberg, Jena, Kaiserslautern, Koblenz, Landau, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Mainz, Marburg, Munich, Oldenburg, Paderborn, Regensburg, Trier, Tübingen, Wuppertal and Würzburg.[64]

Higher education institutes are increasingly concentrating on **vocational further training**, in addition to the general adult education that they have long taught, and devoting appropriate amounts of research and theory to this area.[65]

In addition to basic courses of study in adult education, many types of **short studies** are offered - from formal further studies to auditing of relevant lectures.

The **common element** in academic training of instructors in adult education / further training is that such instructors should be experts in human learning processes and their various forms within different frameworks: different conditions, areas and interests. They should also be experts in the various means available to foster these different learning processes in adults.

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6. Current efforts to reform the German continuing education sector

(oriented to UNESCO's objectives, especially those of the 5th UNESCO conference on adult education, held in Hamburg)

6.1 Better and more effective development of human potential

■ Germany has an extensive network of continuing education institutions and initiatives, with a broad spectrum of providers, along with the relevant infrastructure, which is supported primarily by the Länder and the communities. These resources are available for work toward the UNESCO objectives of developing **human potential** more comprehensively (especially creativity, productivity, energy, imagination, problem-solving abilities, etc.) and to make this potential available for the solution of difficult current problems.

■ The recent increasing concentration on **competence-oriented learning** also serves these ends.[66]

■ Vocationally oriented continuing education in Germany is not oriented exclusively to job-related qualification; instead, it also develops "human resources", especially abilities and skills that enable employees to participate in the democratic process and to help shape the future creatively.

6.2 Making continuing education available to all, and eliminating marginalisation

■ In Germany, the aim of making continuing education available to all is served primarily by the **Länder continuing education laws**. These laws have created the infrastructure for a continuing education sector that is open to all and takes a wide range of participants' needs into account.[67]

■ Continuing education remains affordable for a large part of the population. Those with little or no income can become eligible for **fee reductions**; many cities and communities distribute coupons for free further training to unemployed persons and persons with low incomes.

■ For about twenty years, publicly supported continuing education institutions have carried out special **"target group work"** in order to reach groups within the society who are not normally in contact with education or who require special support - for example, workers, immigrants, prisoners, handicapped people, etc. By means of specially targeted support and model experiments, the Federal Government and the Länder are seeking to integrate certain groups more effectively, such as illiterate people, resettlers from eastern Europe, women whose children have moved out of the house, etc.

■ In many Länder, workers are given **paid leaves of absence** to take part in continuing education .

■ Unemployment is being combated by means of the **Employment Promotion Act** (Arbeitsförderungsgesetz), which finances participation in retraining and further training courses and pays for a large portion of living expenses during training.

■ Nonetheless, training-sector leaders agree that access to adult education still needs to be improved in many areas, that more must be done for education of disadvantaged groups and that the growing education gap between the employed and the unemployed must be reduced.

■ Current attention being given to **self-directed learning** should also attempt to provide support for people who integrate informal learning within their everyday lives. This should include eliminating hindrances to learning, as well as moti-vating people with little educational contact to use open learning systems, media and new information and communications technologies.

6.3 Supporting self-directed living and learning

■ The German continuing education sector is currently redoubling its efforts to support self-directed learning. This is part of the sector's efforts to meet responsibilities to facilitate and support **basic rights to question, analyse, explore and choose** - in life and in learning.[68]

■ **Self-directed learning** is not seen as a process in which learners are left to their own devices, with no help in organising learning. Nonetheless, individuals and groups should be helped and encouraged to choose the courses, resources and aids that are most appropriate in light of their own needs and abilities.

■ An important principle is that flexible, **balanced ways of facilitating self-reliance** should be found - ways that balance „autonomous" learning, which is beyond the capacities of many learners, with constant teacher supervision.

6.4 Overcoming the separations between general continuing education and vocational further training and between formal and informal learning

■ The German continuing education sector is seeking to overcome the separation between general and vocational further education by promoting **key abilities and competencies**: understanding of interrelationships, constructive development of semantic contexts, communicative teamwork and innovative problem-solving. Such overarching key qualifications are important in both work environments and life in general.

■ Flexible approaches to work, and links between a great many types of human activity and learning processes, are expected to foster **holistic, lifelong learning** in Germany - learning that inseparably integrates general, vocational, political and cultural education.

■ The following has occurred in Germany with respect to the call for making educational institutions more accessible: there now are institutions for adult education that offer support to **informal education** and that maintain close contacts with other institutions, initiatives and the public. In addition, an effort is being made to expand institutions for formal education - especially in areas in which there are no adult education institutions open to all.

■ The following general aim is being critically discussed in Germany: developing a new **complementary and support-oriented relationship** between formal and informal learning. This would give more structure and context to informal, situation-oriented learning and make formal, organised learning more interesting and relevant to life in general.

■ In this connection, the problem of **formally recognising results of learning based on life and work experience** is also being discussed in Germany.

■ To begin with, relevant **foreign experiences and insights** in this connection are to be evaluated.

6.5 The roles of the state and of the „civil society" in continuing education

■ UNESCO supports shifting state management and organisation to **NGOs** and recommends that the state concentrate on providing the **framework** for continuing education that is open to all. These processes are already underway in Germany.

■ Over 90% of continuing education events in Germany are organised by non-government providers and organisations and on the basis of non-central initiatives.

■ The state is responsible for providing the overall framework for continuing education and, in part, for financially supporting it. As a result of the current necessary budget consolidation taking place, deregulation and privatisation provide new options for continuing education. On the other hand, they can also pose new problems with regard to access for persons in socially weak positions and for persons who are at a disadvantage due to location or previous education.

■ It is unclear whether the state's partial exit from continuing education, as a result of the increasing burdens on the state, can be compensated for by private initiative, by „grassroots" activities and by a **general mobilisation of the „civil society"**. The various citizens' initiatives and privately organised learners' groups in the German continuing education sector (following the example of the Scandinavian study circles), have not yet been particularly effective or significant.

6.6 Communication and co-operation among continuing education providers and institutions

■ In Germany, the need to promote communication and co-operation among continuing education organisations, in order to create a customer-oriented, clear spectrum of offerings, is increasingly being recognised.

■ **Continuing education discussion groups** now exist on the local, regional, Länder and federal levels. These groups provide a forum for better mutual understanding among the various continuing education representatives, for intensive discussion and for consideration of common concerns, course offerings and problems.

■ There are also regional **continuing education associations**. In some regions and communities, co-operating continuing education institutions and initiatives are being brought together with other partners within effective employment, economic, cultural and education policies.

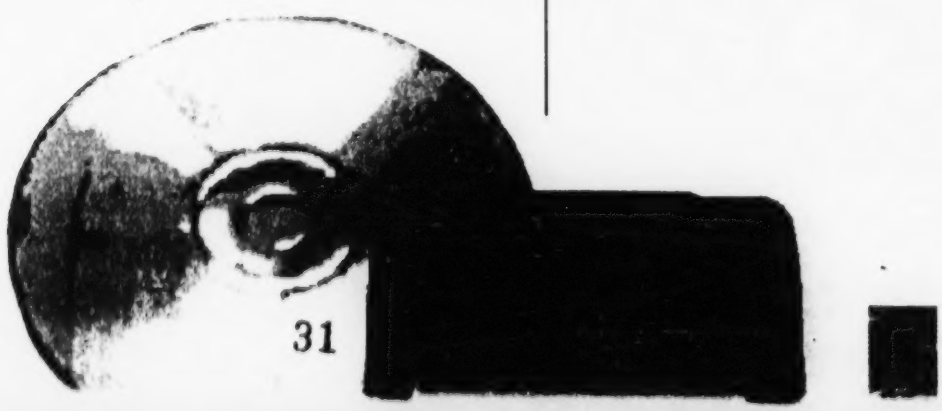
6.7 Use of new technologies

■ There is considerable consensus in German discussion on continuing education that new technologies and media should be applied in such a manner that **people remain the central focus**.

■ Higher education institutes have made much **technical progress** in this regard with the help of an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology (BMBF) for connection of all German higher education institutes to a „data autobahn". In the school sector, the „Connecting Schools to the Network" (Schulen ans Netz) campaign has been successful, and the further training sector now has a wide range of individual initiatives for introducing and testing new technologies.

■ In a number of **model projects**, electronic resources are being used to create new connections between continuing education institutions in Germany and abroad, and to various companies and social and cultural institutions. The first steps toward a „virtual Volkshochschule" have also been taken.

■ Information and communications networks, with a wide range of access options and gateways, are currently being developed. These networks will be flexible, in keeping with a wide range of requirements.



6.8 Orienting the continuing education sector to the employment crisis

■ As a result of growing structurally based unemployment in Germany, continuing education is concentrating increasingly on vocational retraining and further qualification of unemployed persons, as well as on general, non-vocationally oriented further education.

■ In addition, unemployed people can also profit greatly from **general abilities** that help them to understand the world and find meaning.

■ Increasingly, further education institutions in Germany are adjusting their activities to various types of **changing work patterns**, including part-time work, unskilled part-time work, odd jobs and combinations of employment and freelance work.

■ Almost 40% of all adults in Germany do not have a full-time job with fixed working hours. This situation has encouraged more flexible scheduling of continuing education courses, along with attempts to enrich non-permanent positions with **options for learning**.

■ Development is also being considered of a system for early detection and identification of new **qualification requirements**, and for use of possibilities for modularising and regionalising training - in the interest of faster, more flexible **acquisition of qualifications**.

6.9 Promoting peace and intercultural understanding

■ One of UNESCO's central tasks is to promote peaceful coexistence of people from different cultures, nations and religions. This task has become an important challenge in Germany, where foreigners make up 9-10% of the total population.

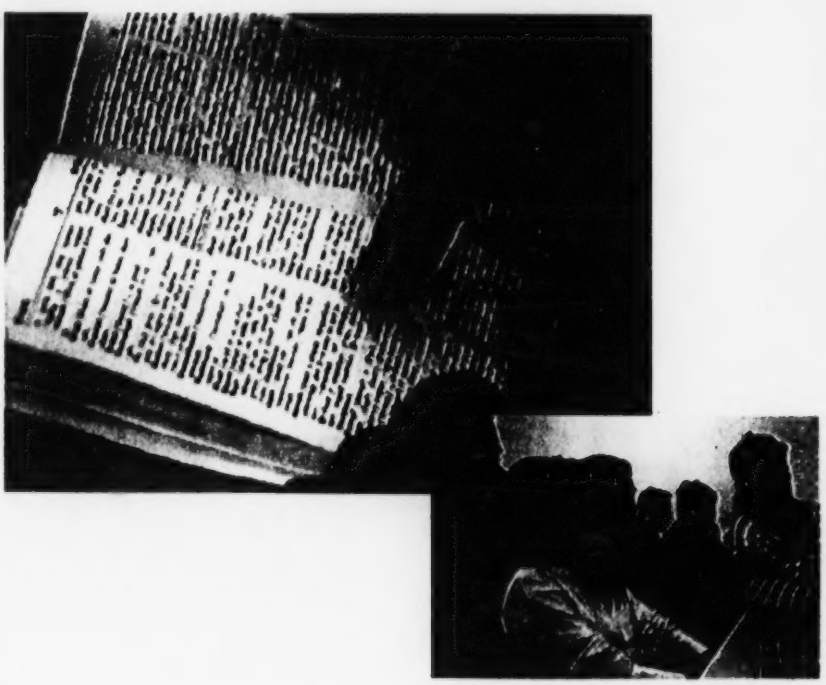
■ Intercultural and **international understanding** plays a central role in **political further education**, which seeks to foster democratic co-operation and conflict resolution by peaceful means.

■ The German continuing education sector is gradually orienting itself to different cultures and to **multicultural openness**.

■ Study and understanding of other languages, cultures and mentalities are an important way to develop openness and **tolerance** for differences and rights of „others" - and to eliminate any isolated tendencies toward hostility against foreigners.

■ Interest in **foreign languages** and cultures is very strong in Germany. For years, foreign language and cultural studies courses have made up the largest share of continuing education courses, and have attracted the largest numbers of participants in continuing education.

■ The continuing education sector in Germany now views itself as having a special role in promoting tolerance, mutual respect and **cultural enrichment** between people of different backgrounds.[69]



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6.10 Developing the „learning society"

■ The close connection between the concepts of lifelong learning and of the learning society - a connection highlighted by the Delors Commission - plays a central role in the German continuing education discussion.[70]

■ The communities are considered to be the most important area for testing and implementation aimed at developing the modern learning society. Initial concepts and approaches for developing future „learning communities" now exist in Germany.

■ The main emphases of such concepts include

- ➜ further development, opening-up and networking of the various educational and cultural resources in the community,
- ➜ calling attention to attractive learning options within the community,
- ➜ developing learning options in various activities and areas of experience,
- ➜ providing consulting and support to help citizens learn.

In the medium term, these policies aim to have all institutions and areas of community life - adult education centres, libraries, museums, exhibits, theatres, parks, government agencies, utilities, services companies, businesses etc. - contribute to the development of a stimulating atmosphere for the various holistic learning activities (formal and informal learning, vocational training and general learning).

In the longer term, the goal is the creation of an open, inviting **„culture of learning"**, in which many opportunities for learning and supporting learning shape daily life and promote citizens' joy in individual and group learning and continuing learning.

On the whole, important approaches are being taken in Germany to develop adult education / continuing education in a direction that is in line with the main aims of UNESCO - especially those formulated by UNESCO's fifth conference on adult education (in Hamburg).

Footnotes

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